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April 8, 1960

Mr. Bruce D. Howard  
2600 Monterey Avenue  
Minneapolis 16, Minnesota

Dear Mr. Howard:

Please forgive me for having taken so long to reply to your letter of March 5th. It certainly warranted a prompter answer.

If you are sincerely interested in research in biochemical genetics, I believe you should seriously question your program of continuing your enrollment in medical school after the completion of the present sophomore year. Exceptionally there might be substantial profit in grinding out a Ph.D. degree after the completion of the medical curriculum, and this may be quite necessary if you contemplated specializing in particular zones of work in medical genetics. The usual four year medical curriculum is, however, very poorly suited indeed as a preparation for a research career and I believe that you should carefully re-evaluate pursuing this unless you know exactly what you are doing. On the other hand, I believe that the first two years of your program could prove to be a most valuable experience in any circumstance.

One could scarcely take exception to your idea of using an elective quarter to sharpen your objectives. You could certainly enroll at Stanford quite profitably taking courses, attending seminars and so forth. As to your working in my own laboratory, I would have to consider your application in competition with demands from other students, including regular graduate students, for the limited space which is available. On the other hand, we can offer fellowship support to those candidates who do make an effective claim.

May I suggest that you talk to Dr. S. G. Bradley in the Department of Bacteriology concerning your general plans. Dr. Bradley could tell you from personal experience the type of training available in my laboratory. After you have discussed this with him, you might write to me to explain how the M.D. program would fit in with your other aspirations. This will make possible a more deliberate reply to your several questions. The application procedures can be deferred until we have brought this correspondence to a conclusion.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg